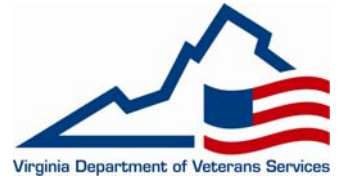


The Virginia Department of Veterans Services



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News Release

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Study identifies optimal location for state veterans cemetery

RICHMOND—A study conducted by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia recommends that Virginia should establish the goal of placing a national or state veterans cemetery within 50 miles of at least 90 percent of its veteran population. The report, “Meeting the Memorial Needs of Virginia Veterans: An Analysis of Existing and Proposed Cemetery Sites,” also recommends that the state plan for the future deactivation of Culpeper National Cemetery and begin planning for a fourth state veterans cemetery in west-central Virginia to meet the long-term memorial needs of Virginia’s veterans.

The study, completed in November, identifies Nelson County as the optimal location for a fourth state veterans cemetery. The Virginia Department of Veteran Services operates two state veterans cemeteries: the Virginia Veterans Cemetery, in Amelia, and the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, in Suffolk. A third state veterans cemetery, to be located in Dublin, is in the planning stages and is expected to open in summer 2010. Three national cemeteries – Arlington, Culpeper, and Quantico –serve the memorial needs of veterans in northern Virginia. Culpeper National Cemetery is expected to be closed to new casketed burials sometime in the next 20 years.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs uses a 75-mile service area radius when planning a new national or state veterans cemetery, but experience at Virginia’s two state veterans cemeteries has shown that the vast majority of the burials were drawn from within 50 miles of the cemeteries. The study notes that distance to a veterans cemetery and proximity to family are key considerations in choosing to be buried in a veterans cemetery. The study recommends adoption of a 50-mile service area. At present, approximately 586,000 of Virginia’s 728,000 veterans – or 82 percent – live within a

Serving those who served.

50 mile radius of a state or national veterans cemetery. Opening of the Dublin cemetery will extend coverage to 89 percent of Virginia's veterans, while a cemetery in Nelson County would ensure that 92 percent were served by a national or state veterans cemetery.

The study notes that after Culpeper National Cemetery is closed to new casketed burials, a state veterans cemetery in Nelson County will be well placed to fill the gap left by the closure of that cemetery. A cemetery in Nelson County would ensure that coverage remains above the 90 percent level. The report notes that land acquisition for a veterans cemetery in Nelson County should be part of a long-term plan, as development pressures in the region are not high. The Nelson County cemetery would be expected to serve approximately 150 veterans per year.

The report examined the effect of lifting residency requirements for burial in a state veterans cemetery. At present, burial in a state veterans cemetery is restricted to veterans who were Virginia residents at the time of death, or to veterans who were Virginia residents when they entered the military. The report found that removing these eligibility requirements would have a relatively small effect on state cemetery interment volumes.

Finally, the report recommends ways to strengthen outreach and marketing efforts.

The report is available on the Virginia Department of Veterans Services website at www.virginiaforveterans.com. Click Reports and scroll down to Studies.

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